

Racing Towards the Unknown

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Summary: Together, Cortana and the Chief had been able to overcome any odds they faced. Now, like in times past, they needed to combine their skills if they were going to survive the next few minutes. Based on the Halo 4 trailer

Racing Towards the Unknown

****Written for **patriot_jackie** for the International Women's Day meme. I'd like to thank her for requesting this because it gave me the excuse to watch the Halo 4 trailer too many times. There are major references to the Halo 4 trailer and the Legendary ending of Halo 3, a nod to "First Strike", and a very, very small reference to the screenshots of the MC that 343 released last week.****

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><p>As an AI, Cortana prided herself on her speed and precision.<p>

Together they allowed her to intercept the Index before it could activate the Halo ring on Installation 04, to perform a microjump through Slipspace to save the Master Chief and the other survivors on Reach, and to evade the Gravemind's relentless attack to ascertain her solution until a certain Spartan fulfilled his promise.

John.

Like her, his speed and precision were two of his most valuable assets. She had seen them work in tandem throughout the time they had been assigned to work with each other.

Together, she and the Chief had been able to overcome any odds they faced, accomplishing seemingly impossible tasks.

Now, like in times past, they needed to combine their skills if they

were going to survive the next few minutes.

She issued the command to the _Dawn_'s distressed systems to wake the Chief up from his cryo-sleep as her subroutines scrambled to figure out what was going on beyond the steel walls of the ship.

They had been floating by an unknown planet when suddenly some sort of portal opened on the surface. Shots had been fired and Cortana had been unable to do anything to prevent the attack. The ship had shuddered; the explosions had started almost immediately due to the _Dawn_'s fragile state.

"I need you," she said, willing for the Chief to wake up faster.
"Chief!"

She frowned as the sensor readings from the ship came flooding into her matrix. They were running out of time. "Wake up, John," she pleaded.

Finally, after two long seconds, she saw the lights on his helmet activate and watched him push open the lid.

"John!" she cried.

He floated to her holotank. "I'm here," he said reassuringly though he hadn't the slightest idea what was going on.

She clung onto that relief as she ducked down when an explosion came from behind them. It was an odd thing to do. She had little time to think about her actions because John removed her matrix chip from the _Dawn _and placed it in his helmet.

It felt like coming home.

Cortana came up with an escape route based on the readings she was still remotely getting from the _Dawn _and John's new speed, courtesy of the jet pack she had created when she had managed to cannibalize several of the ship's systems a couple of years ago. Then, it had almost been serene as they were drifting through space, silent and void.

Unlike now.

She knew her calculations weren't going to be perfect; the ship was still exploding around them, but she had given John a chance to get them out of here alive.

Cortana marked the hurling objects on his HUD as fast as she could calculate their trajectory. John maneuvered through the wreckage, outrunning the balls of fire behind them.

As he raced through the ship, Cortana quickly started to hypothesize several possibilities of what, exactly, was waiting for them but she was cut short when John stopped on the edge of the _Dawn _and looked out at the danger that awaited them.

"Is it Forerunner?" he asked. There was no fear in his voice.

"Not too sure, but I'd say that is a pretty good guess. There's no way the Covenant could have ever come up with something this

intricate," Cortana replied. "I estimate that we'll reach the center of the portal in two minutes. The only problem is the _Dawn_'s structural integrity is going to collapse in thirty seconds."

"Which means..."

"You're gonna have to jump." She uploaded a location marker to where he would have to land for their best chance of survival. "Just imagine that we're back on the Cairo station."

Four seconds passed. He didn't make any motion to move which confounded Cortana. "How long?" he asked.

"Three years," she replied.

"And you?" Here they were seconds from death and he was worried about her Rampancy? If she hadn't been so concerned with the exploding ship they were standing on, she might have been flattered.

"I've still got some time left, but you don't. You need to jump now, Chief!"

Without hesitation, he pushed himself off the destroyed deck towards the unknown. He looked back once at the _Dawn_ watching as it exploded in eerie silence as the vacuum of space silenced its cries. Cortana tensed when his arms stiffened as the gravitational pull of the object pulled him forward.

Just when she thought the light couldn't get any brighter, the light suddenly vanished. They went through the center of the now-darkened eye.

And, suddenly, they were free falling towards the surface of some planet at incredible speed. John activated his jet pack to try to counteract the gravitational force, but it was practically useless. Cortana watched helplessly as they tore through the sky towards the rocky terrain below.

The impact was intense. Video feed from his HUD was offline. His shields screamed at their mistreatment. John lay unconscious on the ground, not responding to Cortana's frantic inquiries if he could hear her.

Well, Cortana thought wryly, _this seems oddly familiar._

End
file.